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**Session: Slums, ghettos, and the internal periphery of the global urban**

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**Title: Structural transformations of slums in Buenos Aires**

### **Introduction**

The present article will analyze the urban and social transformations that took place in slums of the city of Buenos Aires during the last decade. Buenos Aires is the capital city of Argentina and it contains almost 3.000.000 inhabitants.

The population living in slums in the city of Buenos Aires grew from 107.000 persons (2001) to 170.000 (2010). The 50 % of the inhabitants are immigrants who belong to bordering countries (Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians). In 2005, the 25% of this population were tenants (Cravino, 2006), but in 2010 the percentage of tenants reached 40% of the population of these neighborhoods. Contemporaneously, a room rental in slums boosted a 600 %, at a speed rate over the inflation.

We can affirm as hypothesis that the cycle of growth of the slums in the city is closing, giving place to the beginning of a new cycle of occupations of urban land that could be named under "The revolt of the tenants".

The "villas" emerge with the occupation of urban land by families, mainly public, between the 30's and 60's. They were evicted by the military governments (1976-83) but they were repopulated under the recovery of democracy. Over that time the land occupation was based on reciprocity relations, therefore, freed from payment relations. The running out of land to be occupied, together with the pressure over slums as a mean of access to housing due to the economic crisis and, the immigration currents led, by half of the 90s, to the emergence of rooms rental known as "inquilinos". This form became the entry door to slums, since the tenants concentrated in saving up for becoming owners of a house in the same slum. In the present time, newcomers to the slums do no longer become owners after a time of being tenants. The reason of this transformation in the processes of inhabiting slums is due to the inexistence of a housing market inside slums able to absorb the demand of tenants. The urbanization policies have not been efficient.

The methodology of the investigation is based on the accomplishment of surveys in different slums of the city in the year 2005 and 2006 and on a report done in 2010, besides empirical information of diverse villas of the city. In turn, interviews were realized to inhabitants of slums and state civil servants and members of NGOs.

The structure of the article is the following: To begin with, we will be introducing the unofficial phenomenon of the occupations of urban lands in the city, called commonly "villas named common citizen "villas". Afterwards, we will debate about how to understand the process that generated the

“urban informality” within the city’s context. In third place, we will display the structural transformations that take place in the slums in the last two decades and the need for an informal real estate market as an expression of the growing commercialization of urban land occupations. After that, we will explain the transformation processes under a conflict context and the expression of social fascism. Finally, we will present our conclusions.

## 1. The slums (“villas”) of Buenos Aires City

The “villas”, originally named “misery slums” and “emergency slums”, were first created during the 1930`, although this phenomenon became larger during the 1940`, in the context of intense internal migrations. These migrations were the consequence of two simultaneous processes: the collapse of the countryside’s economies and the process of industrialization to replace the imports, which took place mainly in the capital city and its suburbs. This context provided a series of conditions favorable for the development of the metropolis, such as the subsidized public transportation, the possibility to become owner in urban land for the disadvantage ones and the extension of infrastructure networks, also funded by the Government. Nevertheless, these conditions did not prevent informal neighborhoods to come up, named since their beginnings “villas”. Along with the 60`, more immigrants came from bordering countries and in the 90` from different locations of the city.

**We could define the slums as mass urbanizations (or auto-urbanizations), result of the occupation of vacant urban land producing irregular urban forms.** These are not threatened neighborhoods, but organized starting from winding and sometimes narrow corridors, where vehicles can not get through and many times neither do households appliances. Respond to the sum of individual practices and delayed in time, unlike other urban land occupations that are planned and carried out at once (the “settlements”<sup>1</sup>). Homes are built out of **weak or waste materials**. Over time its inhabitants build their houses with masonry. However, the results are always poor houses. They have **high population density**, unlike other informal developments (like the “settlements”). Regarding the location, they emerge in flood or abandoned zones and, therefore, low property values. With the consolidation of the city, some came to a more central location, while others maintained their position in places unfit for urban living, close to sources of contamination or flooding. Have little or none green space (squares) and there are virtually no places not built in private lots, such as gardens. Often, the only large public space is the football field, defended from intrusion and taken care of by neighbors. Have an infrastructure provided by the neighbors in its beginnings, usually in a clandestine manner and then subject of intervention by the state. Many facilities remain as made by the residents, but they were provided of the services lend by the privatized corporations during the decade of the 90`. Generally, the quality of service is fair or bad. Occupational insertion of the inhabitants followed the general ups and downs of the nation’s economy. Currently, most of the residents are low-skilled workers (construction workers, shoemakers, tailors, maids, etc) that sometimes have a direct relationship with the existing productive activities in the surrounding environment, are self-employed or conducting business in the same neighborhood. A minority (but important in the context of the 2001 crisis) are urban recyclers (“cartoneros”).

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<sup>1</sup> The “settlements or “land invasions” are collective occupations of vacant lots (mostly private), which are produced since the 80`s in Buenos Aires suburbs, that is the 24 districts surrounding the capital city. In these invasions, every family is assigned a lot, leaving space for streets, parks, health centers, schools, etc. That is, they form a neighborhood that responds to urban regulations but is the result of an occupation carried out by the homeless.

Residents, in its origins, considered them a transitional habitat to a possible and longed for social growth. Then, since the 80's, these neighborhoods are considered simply as a place to live in the city or the way to home ownership. To sum up, today's slum habitants show the heterogeneity of poverty, including the oldest habitants, new immigrants (from the countryside and bordering countries) and impoverished sectors.

Its residents are carriers of the stigmatization of the society around it, something to which we return later.

The population living in this type of neighborhood was changing over time. Following, we present a REPRESENTATION of this evolution.

Year	1962	1976	1980	1991	2001	2011
Population	42.462	213.823	37.010	52.608	107.805	170.000

Source: Bellardi—De Paula; Instituto de la Vivienda de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires.

It is necessary to clarify that the sharp drop of the population living in slums between 1976 and 1980 was due to the plan for the eradication of the military government that held power in Argentina between 1979 1983. This plan involved the systematic relocation of the “villa’s” population in trucks used to transport municipal solid waste to the periphery and repressive actions on “villa’s” leaders (or the ones that supported them). These was framed with the slogan “beautify the city” and create a better “image” for foreigners visiting the country in 1978, when the world championship of football was being carried out. Few families managed to romaine, resisting legally by conforming the “committee of plaintiffs”.

## 2. The Slums: Socio-spatial Segregation y Fragmentation

This analysis must begin with the same categorizations established by the State and by academic studies, assuming a dual taxonomy City: “formal” city against “informal” city. This classification hides two categories that are not equivalent in terms of valuation. The “formal” city is what found within the rules (which change over time and, therefore, include or leave out of the legal framework certain areas of the city) with a legitimate social status, leading to naturalize as equivalent to “city” or positioned as hegemonic practices and forms of urbanization of certain social sectors. The “informal” city, on the other hand, is anything that does not fit under the definition of “formal” city. It is an ambiguous definition, which is delimited by the negative, and that in reality covers a wide gradient of situations. This notion places the slums on the edge as crystallized forms of complex de-legitimized urbanization, this typology is the furthest from the “must be” in the city. This categorization of informality also operates to define urban conflicts linked to the “villas”. Thus, the fulfilment or not of

the “must be” is transferred to the categorization of actors living in “informality”, associating the “illegal element” of land ownership and its “illegal” practices. It produces what Bourdieu (2001) called “the effect of place” in its negative aspects.

**Neighborhood spaces of the “villas” maintain a contradictory relationship with the “formal city”: they are a part of the city, but considered physically and socially different spaces.** The term subnormal is indicative of this paradigm: the so called “formal” city is normal and everything that does not fit these standards, it is outside the “normal”, installed as a common sense shared by all different sector of society. In short, **they are part of the city without the status of a city, considering not only their social status, but their legal and normative status as well.**

Appealing to the terms segregation / fragmentation /socio-spatial differentiation in itself does not solve the city’s rejection to the device formal – informal city.

The segregation (or other related concepts) is not obvious, otherwise, the first image that appears is that cities are messy, improvised. On the contrary, the matter is to specify to which interests and on which characters planning depends on (Marcuse, 2004). For example, State interventions repeatedly tended to invest in the urban infrastructure of the consolidated areas, creating a vicious cycle oriented to strengthening the formal-informal city, strengthening the processes of legitimacy and de-legitimization of these spaces.

It is very difficult to escape this taxonomy that forces the dichotomy, even when the reality presents more nuances, more shades, because it is recognized that there is legal or urban development informality in what the “formal” city appears to be or vice versa. The difficulty is that this model (dichotomous) is the hegemonic paradigm of intervention and constitutes a social representation shared by all social sectors, but with different names, depending on the actors. That is, **although we question it as a concept, it operates as a social category.** For example, in the “villas” it is common to talk about an “inside” and an “outside” to refer to this dichotomy. In government agencies it is often referred to “villas” as opposed to “neighborhoods” in the same way. Any of these designations refer to the formal-informal social categorization.

The “villas” are representative spaces of a socio-spatial differentiation, and the people living there are stigmatized for belonging to a territory affected negatively in social terms. For this reason, when referring to them it is usually used the label “ghetto”.

The Chicago School studied deeply these spaces<sup>2</sup>, starting from an ecological view of the city. Assuming that what created it were not external relations, but rather the ghetto created their own relationships (Park, away from this overview), that is, it created itself from a self-isolation process. For both Park and Wirth the ghetto is not only an urban phenomenon, but a “state of mind”, conceived as a culture<sup>3</sup>, and closely linked to hostility, violence and the conflicts between the ghetto culture<sup>4</sup> and the rest of the American society. While showing at the same time, the various lifestyles in the city.

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<sup>2</sup> The Chicago school applied the term “ghetto” to urban areas where the poor lived, European immigrants generally not integrated to the American society. According to Park, the ghetto is as much a product of the domination of one group over another, as the defense and cultural resistance of the subordinate ethnic group. To assimilate and improve their subordinate position is central to the group to accept and adopt the values of American society.

<sup>3</sup> Here can be observed the influence of this school in Lewis theoretical formulation of a “culture of poverty”.

<sup>4</sup> For this reason we do not share the idea of a “rich ghetto” as posed Sabarrini (2003)

Wacquant (2001:39) suggests the existence of a “new urban color line”, in which he analyzes the views transformations about the American ghetto. Points out that in a given historical moment there was a strong vindication for this type of space, by social movements invigorating the black community, placed in a situation where the country committed itself to fight racial inequality. In his words: “under the persistent economic subordination and racial confinement, the ghetto of the eighties is very different from the ghetto of the fifties. The ghetto with social interests of the immediate postwar period, compact, strongly bounded and with a full complement of black classes linked together by a unitary collective consciousness, an almost complete social division of work and mobilizing communal organisms with a broad-base representation, has been replaced by what we can call the “hyperghetto” of the eighties and the nineties, whose spatial configuration, institutional and demographic composition, structural position and role in urban society are quite innovative”. This “hyperghetto” is characterized by the decay of the organizational pattern and the lack of government presence, unlike previous stages.

Should take precautions and avoid an uncritical translation of this theory to Argentinean “villas”, precisely because its history differs radically from that of the American ghettos. Recently, the term ghetto is used as a reference for the transformation processes that occur in informal settlements in Argentina, regarding their sociability, relationship with the “formal” city, or phenomenon as patronage. Wacquant (op.cit.) states that no discrimination or segregation means “ghettification”. Therefore, considers that the neighborhoods of relegation in France, which were multiplied when the reproduction mechanisms of the working class took on challenges, are in fact “anti-ghettos” and are deeply penetrated by the State (a process similar to the one in Buenos Aires City “villas”<sup>5</sup>). This does not mean that there is a growing tendency towards ethno-racial divisions and tensions in European cities, so the consideration of an “anti-ghetto” is temporary (in this regard we can particularly highlight the conflicts in the Parisian suburbs in the past few years).

We distance ourselves from those who refer to the Buenos Aires` “villas” as ghettos. We believe that these are two social spaces with large differences, although the share being stigmatized. During the emergence of the ghettos the State is the central actor in the process of relegation, a term that implies an intentional localization of the ghettos in the city. In the case of the “villas”, their origin can be referred to the lack of housing policy and the failures in the housing market (and therefore the States regulation), which creates economic barriers (in some cases social barriers) that hinder the access of the poor not only to urban land but also to housing in the city. Even though in many cases the “villas emerge from specific State agents actions, that in a state of emergency, can not present an intention to limit them to that space. On the other hand, as Wacquant shows (2001), the social variable is central in the ghetto, situation that can not be compared to the one in the Buenos Aires “villas”.

The “villas” and the ghettos share the fact that they are both stigmatized, but this is not exclusive to them. At the same time, the concept “ghetto” is associated with a “ghetto culture” that we do not share and it might constitute our biggest criticism to the eco-cultural position of the Chicago School, label that is still been dragged on many of its uses. According to this school, these imaginaries are available and *“each sector is linked with him depending on the subjective dispositions that have*

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<sup>5</sup> However it is important to highlight that the State`s presence in these neighborhoods can not be attributed to the same effect.

*acquired and the social relations in which it is embedded*" (García Canclini, 1997:95). **The categorization "ghetto" may contribute to an accusation that attributes blame to the subjects in this situation.** Applying labels like "anomie" artificially increases the gaps between areas with and without city status, as the "villas" are considered.

Changes are produced in the sociability and the access conditions to the neighborhoods (particularly the appearance of an informal real estate market), but it can also be noticed changes in the city at large. That is, the social dynamics of the metropolis was being modified and the decade of the 1990 was paradigmatic in terms of re-qualifications and urban operations (Puerto Madero and Abasto are emblematic, although not unique).

We also wish to emphasize that the Buenos Aires City "villas" and suburbs are **heterogeneous spaces**, so we do not agree with those who see a tendency toward the homogenization of neighborhoods commonly called "popular". On the contrary, this tendency can be observed in the enclaves that produce urbanization of elites (*gated communities*), as Svampa shows (2001). There are rearrangements in the social groups that compete for the externalities and status, offering different urban areas, linked, but not mechanically to the social stratification changes in the region.

As Frederic poses (2004), there are spatial classifications that are constituted over time. In some cases, different bodies of the government share with the local population the idea of separating the formal neighborhoods (or "neighbors") of the "villas". In fact, many of the proposed establishment programs intended to transform the "villas" into "neighborhoods", which means that the former are not taken as such. Where the settlements are built, their inhabitants often give a speech that could be synthesized in *"we want a neighborhood, not a villa"*, so again it is being assumed that they are different. Therefore, it is undeniable that there are differences, but these are based on *status*.

Another difference that deserves to be highlighted, between the "neighborhood" and the "villa" as native categories, arises appealing to the idea of urban routs, as it can be affirmed that the "formal" neighborhood's "neighbors" of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area usually go across different sectors in its daily routes, but rarely (or never) go into the "villas", which are symbolic and ideologically closed spaces. This differentiation works as a border for entering, even if there are certain areas more "formalized", such as main roads or community facilities (mostly product of State intervention) to "soften" access/transit and allows the crossing. Thus, the neighborhoods social status territoriality is not juxtaposed directly (or no correlated) with the territoriality of the urban TRAMA of the city, so as equal physical configuration equal use and appropriation of space. This territoriality is being built and should be de-coded.

Therefore, **the "villas are neighborhoods but without prestige, with negative identity, seeking legitimacy of any other neighborhood. In other words, fragments of city with a status of "anti-city"** (including territorial and symbolic marks!). Hence the strategy of its inhabitants is to remove the negative label and assign the "neighborhood" with "normal" status" (same to say, in a way, "formal city). This status means getting rid of certain essential elements (distinctive marks) that are associated with the lack of prestige, for example, replacing walkways with streets. However, this material transformation is inserted in a process with medium-range cycles, for the "villa" is an ever-changing place, growing constantly, being built. In contrast, even when their urban or architectural condition changes, the stigma and the status are not automatically modified. For this reason, many "settlements" (informal neighborhoods that mimic the ways of the formal urban neighborhoods) of

Buenos Aires suburbs, although physically they do not have a very marked difference to their environment, in most cases, often bear the stigma of the “villa”. That is, the territory feeds back a negative identity to the inhabitants, situation that is not taken passively, otherwise it is the subject of dispute and it is to be transformed (Cravino, 2003). The way mass media approaches, highlighting negative aspects, such as the drug market and crimes within the “villa” strengthens the stigma day by day.

### 3. The cycle of the “villas” and the commercialization to inhabit the districts: the “informal” real estate market

The massive invasion (more than 10,000 people) that took place in an abandoned park (Indoamericano) in the City of Buenos Aires in December 2010 and the occupation of other lands almost simultaneously, bares many residents reality: **those who are evicted from the “villas”** are left with no choice but to occupy any place in the city, for they have nothing to lose. This shows the complexity that living in a “villa” has gained and, **particularly, evidences the end of the “villas” growth cycle. All this happens in a context in which many other citizens are displaced to these neighborhoods for not finding a home on the market and the lack of public housing projects of social interests or the lack of funding of the existing ones and because of the practically none existent State investment for the improvement of the neighborhoods.**

The Buenos Aires “villas” home to about 200,000 people<sup>6</sup>, double than 2001 and four times more than 1991. This is a sign of the importance that these neighborhoods have acquired as a way of inhabiting the city. There are different ways of classifying and some haven’t even been recognized as such by the official records. There are about twenty, arriving almost to a thousand in the Metropolitan area. In the Capital city began to repopulate with the return of democracy, after violent and massive evictions conducted by the last military dictatorship. The “villas” are concentrated in the south and have over 30 years of urban dynamics and social growth. In addition, the south holds other deficits, such as education and health, which in recent years have been particularly neglected.

The causes of the population growth in the “villas” are:

- a) **New generations born in the villages** need more houses and territory. These families can only find a place to live in the same “villa” in which they were born (where their parents live) or in similar places.
- b) At the same time, **the process of evictions of occupied houses was increased** (in a legal or administrative way) in the last decade, while some retaining policies (such as hotel accommodation for the homeless) were dismantled (mainly because they did not reach the minimum conditions and lack the interest on behalf of the government) and better choices were not generated, but instead, it forced more people into the “villas”.
- c) The **evictions of small and poorly organized “villas”**, generated the same growth process in bigger ones, where the displaced stayed.
- d) **The closure of many hotels**, decision taken by the owners. The little government subsidies are just enough to rent a room in a “villa”, while there are hundreds of vacant houses property of the government.

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<sup>6</sup> While census data refers to 170.000 is known the under-report, particularly of the tenants.

- e) Maintaining **migration networks**, particularly from bordering countries (Paraguay and Bolivia) and Peru.
- f) **The displaced from the city**. That is, the families that could not maintain their house in the formal city (both owners and renters).

**All the population that settles in the “villas” (because of the factors a, b, c, d, e, f) generates pressure on the constructed spaces where there is virtually no urban land to fill. For this reason, the inhabitants started making taller buildings, linked to the lack of rooms for rent. That is, with the constant increase of the population in the “villas” appears a process of vertical growth.**

Thus, approximately since 15 years ago, the chances of living in a “villa” increasingly linked to the possibility of renting a room with shared bathroom, where it would live the entire family, regardless of the quantity of members. Rooms are usually under 10 m<sup>2</sup>, many without ventilation and where cooking is takes place on a gas cylinder.

Until recently (about 5 years) **the rent was the gateway to the “villa” because in time the renters would save enough money to buy a house in the neighborhood and change their status from renter to “owner” (this means owner of the building, but not of the land)**. Meanwhile, living in a “villa” had become, more or less, a stable way to live in the city (but without exit options) since there were no more major evictions, with some exceptions (Villa 31 in Retiro and Rodrigo Bueno in the Reserva Ecologica). However, we can say that **this cycle starts to run low due to de large number of renters that never get the chance of becoming “owner”**. At the same time, **urban infrastructure** services, built mostly by neighbors, have been **showing signs of collapse** for several years now: constant blackouts, overflowing sewers, limited water and with uncertain quality, poor illumination and garbage collection service and even worse security.

We distinguish **two types of rentals**<sup>7</sup>: some neighbors rent one or two rooms of their house as a way to earn an income. They obey the logic of survival because the have no jobs or opportunities. The landlords are usually single woman with children, elderly, disabled, chronically ill or long-term unemployed. On the other hand, there are buildings with 20 or 30 rooms with shared bathrooms. These buildings are often called tenements. Their owners usually live on the ground floor. This practice is not highly praised by local residents, on the contrary, are seen as people who obtain incomes far above the vast majority of the inhabitants of the “villa” at the expense of its neighbors. These “owners” do not allow a tenant to remain in the same room for several years, to prevent tenants to believe that they are “owners”. At the same time, when a tenant can not pay, he must leave the room immediately, without any contemplation of need for accommodation. This means that the tenants live in constant fear of becoming homeless in any moment: either because the “owner” decides not to rent them the room any more or because they have no money to pay for the room and therefore, the only possible situation left is to live “in the street”. The access to the rent is obtained through the information circulating by word of mouth in the neighborhoods. Previous social networks are central to the information flow

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<sup>7</sup> In our studies (Cravino 2006, 2008) we found a strong relationship between the “owner`s” and the tenant`s nationality. That is, Bolivian usually hire their countrymen, as well as the Paraguayans and the Peruvians, and in less extent Argentinean.

Housing trajectories have mutated deeply in recent decades. Before the mid-90's, those who came to a "villa" use to go to a relative's house or countrymen. Over time, built a new house in the "villa", occupied a vacant lot and so the neighborhood would grow in population. Then, when there was no more land occupy, began the process of vertical growth (and densification), that is to say constructing taller buildings (which now can reach up to six stories), mainly for rent. However, the trajectories had still the possibility, after several years of saving or a loan, of becoming "owner" of a house in the "villa". This could happen only when tenants were 10 or 15% of the population, as there is a constant rotation of those who move to return to their home town or to go elsewhere in the city (or because of the life cycle of households). Today we can estimate that 40% of the population lives as tenants. Therefore, it is impossible for them to have a chance of becoming "owners" (in addition, as the demand increases, so does the prices) and there will never be so many houses for sale as tenants who would buy one.

On the other hand, there is the **buying and selling of houses** in these neighborhoods by those who need the many in case of an emergency (particularly because of health issues or unemployment) or because they have to move (for many reasons, including family, job, migrations or going back to their hometown). We find that the prices depend greatly of the "owner's" judgment. The price is linked to the money the "owner" needs, the amount he invested building it or what he believes the house is worth. In these cases we find no middleman, for is a trade made personally, and when it comes to the sale conditions, they can be flexible. In some cases, houses can be sold in installments. Transaction documents are often made, and sometimes witnesses presence the operation to avoid claims. The access to a purchase is obtained through the information circulating in the neighborhoods, or notices placed in the houses or in public places. The market dynamics has to do with the joints and the residential displacement of the popular sectors.

Synthesizing, **the informal real estate market** (this is because there are no official records) **takes place within the neighborhood's sociability in the "villa"** and can only be understood by it, those who rent often know the "owner" and so do the buyers and sellers. This sociability is also expressed in the significant presence of relatives or friends among the residents of the "villa". At the same time, these social networks involve, as classical anthropology investigations have studied (Lomnitz, 1975) forms of social contention for money loans or food, child care or assistance in building or repairing houses.

This strong rental pressure, in particular since about 5 years ago when the rent fee starts increasing in very high proportions, pushes thousands of families out of their houses multiplying the occupations in the cities and in the "villas". **In all cases, the squatters are tenants who can not afford to buy a house in the "villa"** (their highest aspiration) **or can not afford the increasing costs of the rent** (which has increased about 8 times its original price, 4 years ago) well above inflation. This way there were various occupations in the adjacent areas of the "villas" 31 Bis, 31 (Retiro), 1-11-14 (Bajo Flores), 21-24 (Barracas), 20 (Lugano), 15 (Mataderos) and other vacant spaces, commonly in railway land, as happened in Barracas, Palermo, Paternal, Chacarita, Caballito and others. Using Acquaints terms (2007), they are the "urban outcasts", those who can not even find a place to live in the "villas". This is why we can say that it is the silent rebellion of the neighborhood's tenants, the new inhabitants of the city.

Undoubtedly, in this desperate situation, many tenant families accept proposals to purchase spaces to fill, proposals made by what the media called “the mob” or “the actors of the real estate business”. That is, those taking advantage of the situation and gain the courage (or opportunity cost) to fill empty spaces (of any quality). This is possible because people are afraid of evictions; violence and do not always have the courage to begin the occupation of vacant lands. Others surely take advantage from this desperate situation to generate political lobbying, the real problem is not in the lack of security, but in the absolute lack of housing options for the new families raised in the “villas” and other city residents with low income.

#### **4. Social Fascism and xenophobia**

The occupation of the Indoamericano Park and other places generated a profound debate in the Buenos Aires society and mass media. One fact that must be considered is that there were three deaths: two policemen by hand of neighboring bands that were against the occupation. This evidences the deep xenophobia of our society; people make no difference between “villa’s” residents and bordering countries migrants from criminals. This association came very clear in a speech of the Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, belonging to a conservative party, when referring to the urban land occupations as a cause of the “uncontrolled immigration”.

This speech, like that of the media, turns the victims into perpetrators and criminalizes poverty and hides the question; What access policies to the city are available for the neighbors (temporarily squatters) that can not access to a place to live through the real estate market, while the local State is only concerned about the urban aesthetics (shown by the expensive remodeled corners in the North area) and it does not address to the solution of the housing deficit that the census of year 2001 had already proven with a horrifying numbers of 500.000 people homeless in a city with less than 3.000.000 inhabitants?

*Social fascism*, as defined by the portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, does not refer to a return to the fascist political regime of the thirties and forties (XX century), but “a social and civilized regime”. Sousa Santos (2006) argues that in contrast to the authoritarianism of the fascist political regime this social fascism is pluralistic and it is not opposed to democracy, but “promotes it to so that it is no longer necessary nor desirable, to sacrifice it to promote capitalism”.

Sousa Santos mentions various forms of social fascism: *the social apartheid*, *the parallel State*, *the parastatal* (contractual and territorial), *the insecurity*, *the financial*, etc. Common to all these forms is that there is always a social group protected by the State guaranteeing their rights, and other groups lack such rights and when they claim them they are called usurpers, violent, undeserved of protection but social damnation. This concept may be particularly useful to characterize certain phenomena that are taking place in this stage of growing social exclusion in the current neoliberal capitalism.

The notion of *fascism of the social apartheid* describes the social segregation of the excluded “within a urban cartography divided in wild areas and civilized areas”. In the first one there is a state of constant violence and no rules for coexistence, but governs the law of the fittest. In the second ones, individuals govern by common rules of coexistence, but because they feel threatened by the “wild areas” exclude those who inhabit these spaces. These concepts can be useful for understanding the strong stigmatizing processes that suffers those who living in the “villas” of the Buenos Aires City.

## Conclusions

Unlike the original patterns of urban land occupation that led to the formation of “villas” in the city, where mediated no payment but reciprocal relationships, and today, ironically, the poor are forced to have constant money to get a place to live in the city (even when it comes to live in a “villa” as a tenant, situation quite unstable). This is the reason why the number of people living in the streets increases every day. This information emphasizes the need to regulate the real estate market, but particularly the land and the urgent need to generate changes in the urban standards to facilitate the access to the city for the low-income workers or the unemployed.

In particular, immigrants from bordering countries are subject to discrimination in the real estate market. For example, if they want to rent an apartment or a house because they have proper Argentinean documentation, formal employment and their income allows them, they can not do so because this right is denied to them due to their nationality. This contrasts with the rise in rentals of apartments or rooms to European, America or other foreigners who visit our country and do not require any documentation.

In the development of conflicts over urban land in “villas” and regarding the surroundings, are involved both actions on behalf of the inhabitants and State interventions (practices and speeches, which generate confluences, negotiations and disputes), and even the actors or sectors that operate in other areas of the city. All this creates a particular territoriality, which refers to representations of space to categorize neighborhoods in the city and valorizes them differentially. The question that “villas” challenges is not only to social conflicts, but to the arrangement for urban and governmental management, which are crystallized into processes and practices that are should be analyze together. Also challenges the way we understand and experience life in the city. This way, the research data we obtained in the “villas” of Buenos Aires report that these neighborhoods are no longer the place that can shelter the most disadvantaged in society, instead expels many outside (for lack of income). These are the ones who were living as tenants and now express a desperate “rebellion” process occupying different parts of the city, with nothing to lose. **All this evidences the end of a growth cycle due to their own ways and also because of the failure of local government policies to give accommodation to low-income sectors.** Is worth mentioning the contradictory practices carried out by the various governments over the past two decades. But in particular, the urban hostile policy towards the “villas” being developed by the current government. Expressing in through their own members what Sousa Santos calls “social fascism”.

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